

upon the realization of her vision and to recognize her for her dedication to the Rochester, New York community.

July 7, 2012 will mark the official kick off of the Conkey Cruisers, a free neighborhood "biking to better health" program that will journey throughout the northeast crescent of Rochester, otherwise known as the Conkey-Clifford Neighborhood. The Conkey Cruisers is an official 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has singlehandedly unified an inner city neighborhood by addressing two important factors: crime and health.

Just one year ago, Ms. Bowick was out running in her neighborhood when she had two disturbing encounters. First, a young boy called out to her, "Hey, lady! Are you on probation?" He assumed that Ms. Bowick was running from the police, as he apparently had little understanding of any other reason for running in that particular neighborhood. Soon after, an older man accused Ms. Bowick of being an undercover cop, boldly stating, "She is the police, because nobody exercises in this neighborhood!"

These encounters inspired Ms. Bowick to start an exercise program in the ConkeyClifford Neighborhood. The program advocates "Getting fit, one street, one person, one bike at a time." As a registered nurse, Ms. Bowick understands the health benefits of regular exercise, particularly at a time when our nation is experiencing an epidemic of obesity. Her efforts are getting an entire neighborhood up and moving, all the while restoring safety and a sense of home back to the residents.

The signature black, yellow and white Conkey Cruiser t-shirts can now be seen daily on the streets of Conkey Avenue, as neighbors both young and old exercise on their bikes. Beginning July 7th, youth from the Conkey-Clifford neighborhood will participate in the six-week, five days a week free Conkey Cruisers program, which provides an introduction to safe bicycling and healthy eating, as well as an opportunity to earn President Obama's Active Lifestyle Award.

I am proud that such dedicated individuals call my district home, and that they have committed themselves to improving their neighborhoods, increasing safety, and pursuing health for all of our residents. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Theresa Lou Bowick and the Conkey Cruisers.

IN RECOGNITION STEVEN ROLLINS

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 26, 2012

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Stephen Rollins upon his retirement after twenty-five years of public service as Town Administrator and Town Manager of Hanover.

Mr. Rollins' career in public service began in 1973 when he worked for the Illinois Department of Local Government Affairs following his graduation from The University of Vermont. Since then, he has proved himself to be an innovative and efficient administrator in a variety of public service roles. He was a leader in the centralization of the Hanover town government, and was instrumental in streamlining the

town's process for grants and expenditures. Mr. Rollins has received national recognition for his work on Hanover's health plan and local praise for his simplification of the town's yearly budget.

As town administrator, Mr. Rollins demonstrated his flexibility and leadership ability. Not only were these characteristics seen in the day-to-day operations of local government, but they were also evident in crisis situations—perhaps, most memorably, when Hanover's town hall was severely damaged in a fire. As de facto contractor overseeing the town hall's renovations, Mr. Rollins repeatedly demonstrated his ability to improvise and assume unconventional roles when necessary. It was therefore very fitting when he was given the title of Town Manager in August of 2010, and became the town's first person to occupy this position. In his role as a representative of Hanover, Mr. Rollins typified the best of what the town has to offer. Always putting the community first, he dedicated his career to making local government work for the people.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Stephen Rollins on this remarkable occasion. I ask that my colleagues join me in wishing him a wonderful retirement and many years of happiness, as well as in thanking him for working tirelessly to build the town of Hanover into the beautiful community we know today.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE REHAB AND AHMED AMER FOSTER CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2012

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 26, 2012

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduced the Rehab and Ahmed Amer Foster Care Improvement Act of 2012. The Act will enhance the existing federal policy of encouraging state foster care programs to place children in the care of willing and able relatives.

This legislation accomplishes that goal by requiring States that receive federal funding for foster care programs to add certain procedural enhancements to their foster care programs so as to ensure a more fair placement decision-making process.

Specifically, my bill requires that, within 90 days after a State makes a foster care placement decision, the State must provide notice of such decision to the following affected parties:

- the child's parents;
- relatives who have informed the State of their interest in caring for the child;
- the guardian;
- the guardian ad litem of the child;
- the attorney for the child;
- the attorney for each parent of the child;
- the prosecutor involved; and
- the child if he or she is able to express an opinion regarding placement.

Additionally, States must establish procedures that:

- allow any of the parties who receive notice of the State's placement decision to request, within five days after receipt of the notice, documentation of the reasons for the State's decision;
- allow the child's attorney to petition the court involved to review the decision; and

require the court to commence such review within seven days after receipt of the petition and conduct such review on the record.

The harrowing story of Rehab and Ahmed Amer of Dearborn, Michigan prompted me to craft this bill.

In 1985, the Amers lost two of their children to Michigan's foster care system after Rehab had been subject to criminal charges related to the death of her two-year-old son Samier, who died because of head injuries resulting from a fall in a bathtub.

Although Rehab had been acquitted in August 1986 of any criminal wrongdoing in connection with Samier's death, the State refused to return the Amers' other two children to them and, in fact, removed a third child from the Amers' custody four months after Rehab's acquittal.

As a temporary alternative, Rehab's brother petitioned to be a foster parent to the Amers' three children, but was denied his petition even though he had previously served as a foster parent for other children.

It is important to note that the Amers are Muslim. Nevertheless, the State, rather than placing the Amers' children with a foster family of the same faith and cultural background, sent them to live with an evangelical Christian family, which re-named the Amers' children—Mohamed Ali, Sueheir, and Zinabe—with Christian names and raised them as Christians.

Today, only the oldest of the Amers' three living children, Mohamed Ali, now known as Adam, communicates with them.

In reaction to the Amers' story, Michigan enacted what became known as the Amer Law. That law requires foster care placement agencies in Michigan to consider and give special preference for relatives when making a foster care placement decision.

The Amer Law is consistent with federal foster care policy, which also seeks to give preference to a child's relatives and, for Native American children, a family of the same cultural background as the child, when making placement decisions.

The Amer Law, however, has several provisions that go beyond current federal law to ensure due process. In sum, this law gives parents, relatives, guardians, and the child in certain cases additional procedural rights, including the right to written notice and an explanation of a placement decision. In addition, it authorizes judicial review of a placement decision by a foster care agency.

My legislation simply adds these enhanced due process features of the Amer Law to existing federal foster care law.

The best interests of the child should always be the overriding consideration when making foster care placement decisions. That standard, however, should also require foster care agencies to give special preference to placing a child with relatives, where the child can be raised in the same culture or religion as his or her own, all other things being equal.

I thank Rehab and Ahmed Amer for bringing this issue to light and for their tireless efforts to make the foster care placement process fairer for everyone, first in Michigan, and, now, nationally.